



THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

The Museum as a Memory Institution

Citation for published version:

Rutter, J, Alexandru, C, Niven, E, Wolters, M & Logie, R 2015, The Museum as a Memory Institution. in *The Psychonomic Society Governing Board Edinburgh Symposium*. The Psychonomic Society Governing Board Edinburgh Symposium, Edinburgh, United Kingdom, 17/07/15.

Link:

[Link to publication record in Edinburgh Research Explorer](#)

Document Version:

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Published In:

The Psychonomic Society Governing Board Edinburgh Symposium

General rights

Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Edinburgh Research Explorer is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy

The University of Edinburgh has made every reasonable effort to ensure that Edinburgh Research Explorer content complies with UK legislation. If you believe that the public display of this file breaches copyright please contact openaccess@ed.ac.uk providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.




See discussions, stats, and author profiles for this publication at: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/280229891>

The Museum as a Memory Institution

Conference Paper · July 2015

READS
89

5 authors, including:




Elaine Niven

The University of Edinburgh

9 PUBLICATIONS 76 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE



Marla Wolcott

The University of Edinburgh

79 PUBLICATIONS 445 CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

The Museum as a Memory Institution

Jason Rutter, Cristina Alexandru, Elaine Niven,
Maria Wolters & Robert Logie

ForgetIT
Department of Psychology, The University of Edinburgh

Overview

This sociological aspect of the ForgetIT project seeks to develop a **conceptual framework for organisational memory**. Based on interviews with curatorial and management staff in a national museum the research attempts to identify the range of memory and forgetting practices within the museum. An attempt is made to develop a taxonomy which can be tested with other organisations with the intention to explore the theoretical and practical value in using **human memory as a metaphor** for understanding organisational memory.

Problem

For an organisation key issues for managing organisational memory and forgetting include:

- ◆ Integrating key organisational memory across systems;
- ◆ Enabling shared processes for encoding and retrieving organisational memory;
- ◆ Developing a framework for managing staff's tacit knowledge ;
- ◆ Reflexively developing a strategy for what knowledge should be preserved or forgotten;
- ◆ Supporting change while preserving key organisational memory;

Organisational Memory

Research on organisational memory has largely taken a **functional approach** (D'Adderio, 2001; Feldman & Feldman, 2006; Spender, 1993, 1996, 1998). Memory is seen as:

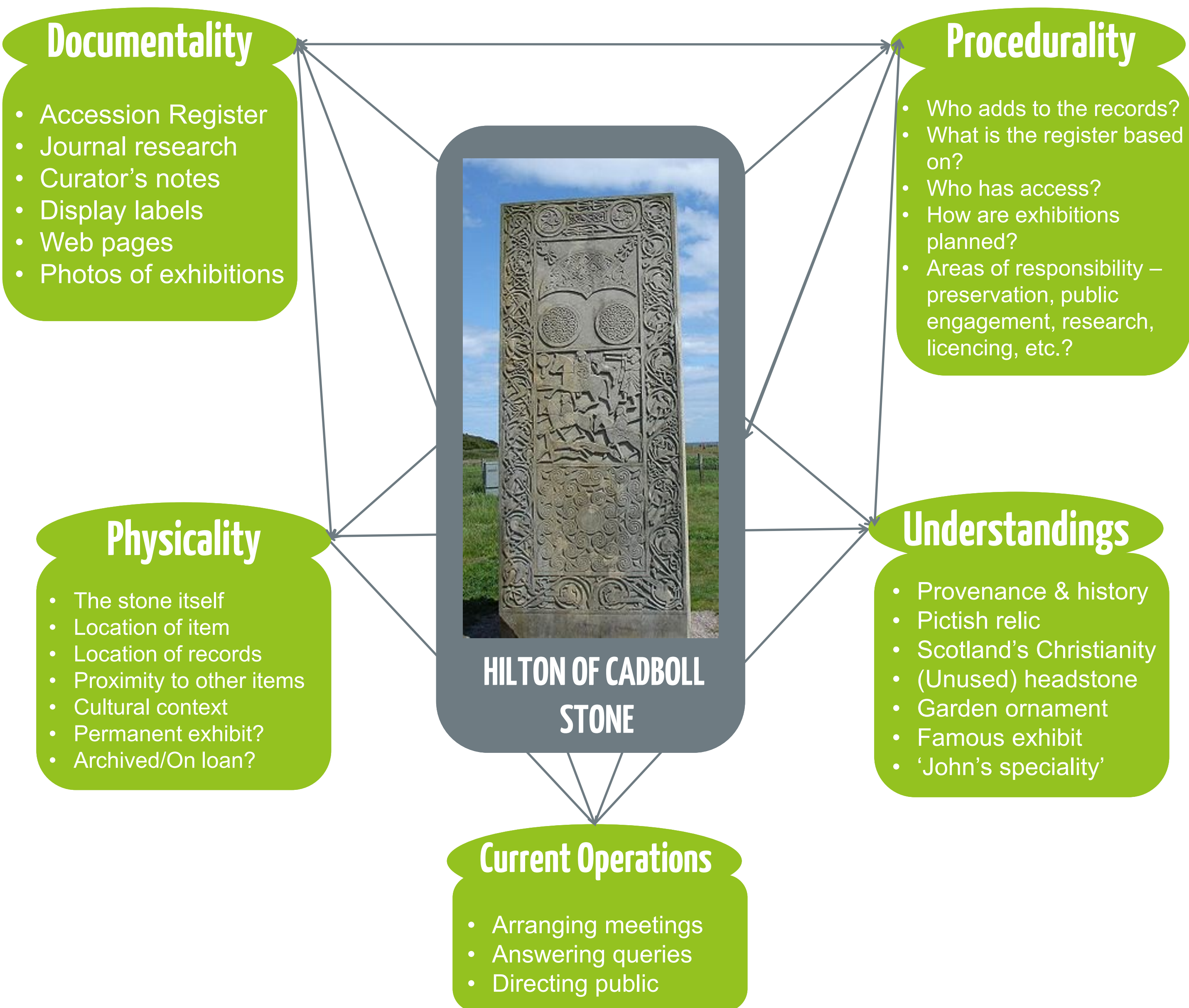
- ◆ Data and information which is be stored in systems or individuals;
- ◆ A resource in need of management;
- ◆ A tool to support efficiency and streamline business activities;
- ◆ Supporting the firm as a system for generating revenue.

However, memory is not simply a process of storage and retrieval of veridical data but rather the **synthesis of different sources of information**. (Loftus & Palmer, 1974) We are interested in shared and negotiated processes of organisational memory, seeing memory work as practice and routines. Organisational memory is **'irreducibly embedded in a collective practice that underlies even individual knowledge and action'** (Hecker, 2012).

Organisational Forgetting

Managed forgetting has the potential support dynamic change. Knowledge of the past can become problematic from an organisational perspective when it:

- ◆ Presents a barrier to adopting new knowledge
- ◆ Supports outdated practices
- ◆ Is used to develop future strategies based on information which has been superseded
- ◆ Reinforces unproductive boundaries across teams and within an organisation
- ◆ Encourages the rejection of innovation and innovative practices



Practices of memory work create value for objects

Organisational Memory			Active	Passive
	Documentality	Storage		
		Retrieval		
		Distribution		
	Procedurality	Practice		
		Interaction		
		Routines		
		Training		
	Physicality	Technology		
		Location		
		Team Proximity		
Understandings	Beliefs			
	Trust			
	Prediction			
	Protection			
	History/Myth			
Current Operations	Responsive Operations			

↕

No Encoding

↕

No Retrieval

↕

Deterioration

↕

Overwriting

↕

Deletion

↕

Organisational Forgetting

Doing Organisational Memory

- **Documentality** (Organizational Memory for Knowledge)
Externalisation of memory – writing, pictures, databases, etc.
- **Procedurality** (Organizational Procedural Memory)
Practices, routines and schedules routinely enacted
- **Physicality** (Organizational Action Memory)
Technological affordances, division & segmentation of space
- **Understandings** (Personal Memory of Organization Members)
Institutionalised values and beliefs, tacit knowledge
- **Current Operations** (Organizational Working Memory)



The record becomes an artefact

Over time analogue records take on historical value

References

- D'Adderio, L. (2001). Crafting the virtual prototype: How firms integrate knowledge and capabilities across organisational boundaries. *Research Policy*, 30(9), 1409–1424.
- Feldman, R. M., & Feldman, S. P. (2006). What links the chain: An essay on organizational remembering as practice. *Organization*, 13(6), 861–887.
- Hecker, A. (2012). Knowledge beyond the individual? Making sense of a notion of collective knowledge in organization theory. *Organization Studies*, 33(3), 423–445.
- Loftus, E. F., & Palmer, J. C. (1974). Reconstruction of automobile destruction: An example of the interaction between language and memory. *Journal of Verbal Learning and Verbal Behavior*, 13(5), 585–589.
- Spender, J. C. (1993). Competitive advantage from tacit knowledge? Unpacking the concept and its strategic implications. *Academy of Management Proceedings*, 1993(1), 37–41.
- Spender, J. C. (1996). Organizational knowledge, learning and memory: Three concepts in search of a theory. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*, 9(1), 63–78.
- Spender, J. C. (1998). Pluralist epistemology and the knowledge-based theory of the firm. *Organization*, 5(2), 233–256.
- Walsh, J. P., & Ungson, G. R. (1991). Organizational memory. *The Academy of Management Review*, 16(1), 57–91.

Organisational memory: 'stored information from an organization's history that can be brought to bear on present decisions'.
(Walsh & Ungson, 1991)

